

Participant information sheet

The effects of social distancing on mental health, quality of life and the use of social media amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

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You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you want to take part in the study or not, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information and take your time to consider if this is right for you.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to understand the effects of social distancing on mental health, quality of life and the use of social media amid the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and social distancing measures are influencing people's life experiences including quality of life, mental health and use of social media as a means to stay connected. We would like to find to what extent the lockdown and social distancing is impacting people's lives in UK, but also to see how that impact compares to other countries in the world such as Norway, USA and Australia. This information will be of importance for social and healthcare workers as well as policy makers for better supporting services for people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation in this research project is voluntary.

What does it involve?

We are inviting you to complete a survey.

The survey will consist of 42 questions to understand how the covid-19 pandemic is affecting your quality of life and mental health and your usage of social media as a means to stay connected.

The survey will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

Basic anonymous demographic data will also be collected (age, sex, level of education, work situation).

What will happen to me if I take part?

- This leaflet gives you the information as to what you will be expected to do if you decide to participate in the research. Once you have read the information there will be opportunity for you to contact the researchers to ask questions about the research
- If you are happy to participate please click the link below (at the end of this document) to complete the survey.

Any benefits to you?

There might not be a direct benefit to you for participating in this research but from the information you provide we will be able to better understand any changes in quality of life and mental health that are due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as better understanding of social media preferences and usage, which will hopefully enable us to influence the provision of high quality services for people affected by the pandemic.

Any risk to you?

We do not expect there to be any disadvantages or risks to you during the study. The study does not imply any known potential disadvantages, except that the respondents will have to think through their present situation in the pandemic. This may of course trigger worry or sadness, but this will be unlikely more than they already experience.

What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

This is not a compulsory project. If you decide for any reason not to complete the survey, you can do so. The data cannot be withdrawn from the study as all responses are anonymous.

What will the researcher do with the data?

While this study was initiated by Prof Amy Østertun Geirdal at OsloMet, The University of Salford is the sponsor for the UK part of the study. We will be using information from you (data) in order to undertake this study and University of Salford will act as the data controller for this study.

We are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

The University of Salford will keep anonymised data for a period of 3 years after the study has finished.

The data will only be used for non-commercial, scholarly research and teaching. All data will be used according to the aim of the research described above. The survey does not include any question that can identify the respondent either by name, e-mail address, telephone number, or other IDs like IP addresses. The answers can thereby not be linked to the individuals, neither directly nor indirectly. This means, that both the answers that are given and the later publications are totally anonymous.

You can find out more about how we use your information by contacting Dr Mariyana Schoultz (Email: m.schoultz@schoultz.ac.uk)

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

The research data will remain confidential between you and the researchers. Any information stored which you provide will be anonymous and not identifiable to you.

WHAT NEXT?

- **If you are happy to take part in the research, please click on the following link <http://tiny.cc/urnonz>**

- **If you are unsure, talk to someone you trust and feel they will be able to help you make a decision as to whether or not you should participate.**

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to the researcher. If you would rather speak to someone else at the University of Salford, or if you wish to make a formal complaint about this research, please forward your concerns to Professor Andrew Clark, Chair of the School of Health & Society Research Ethical Approval Panel, University of Salford. Email a.clark@salford.ac.uk; tel. 0161 2954109.

Extra support

If you need to discuss any issues arising from the survey, participants can access the Mind helpline on telephone: 0300 123 3393 or text: 86463. Or you can access extra support on the NHS Every Mind Matters website: <http://tiny.cc/aqhgnz>

Lead researcher's name:

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Thank you for taking time to read this leaflet